

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 06311 180937Z

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, PFOR, TH
SUBJ: U.S. RESIDUAL MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND

1. AS YOU ARE AWARE WE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RTG ON OUR MILITARY FORCE LEVELS AND RESIDUAL MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND FOR THE PAST YEAR. WE ARE AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR, AND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR YOU TO HAVE A BRIEF RECAPITULATION OF OUR EFFORTS TO DATE AND THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

2. ON 19 MARCH 1975 THE NEWLY ELECTED KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT IN A POLICY STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT CALLED FOR THE TOTAL WITHDRAWAL OF US FORCES WITHIN ONE YEAR. BY AUGUST THIS POSITION HAD BEEN MODIFIED BY THE RTG TO APPLY ONLY TO "COMBAT FORCES". BOTH PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI INDICATED IN DISCUSSIONS DURING THE PERIOD AUGUST-NOVEMBER THAT OTHER FACILITIES SUCH AS JUSMAG, RAMASUN RADIO RESEARCH STATION, KO KHA RADAR SITE AND A PRESENCE AT UTAPAO RTNAB COULD REMAIN.

3. THE LAST US COMBAT AIRCRAFT DEPARTED THAILAND ON DECEMBER 18, 175 AND KORAT, THE LAST OF THE AIR BASES SCHEDULED TO BE CLOSED, WAS OFFICIALLY TURNED OVER TO THE THAI ON 29 FEBRUARY 1976. SIMULTANEOUSLY, DIYCUSSPONS CONTINUED WITH THE RTG ON THE CONFIGURATION OF THE RESIDUAL PRESENCE. WE PROPOSED TO RETAIN A TOTAL

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 06311 180937Z

RESIDUAL PRESENCE OF 3,000 MEN: APPROXIMATELY 1,000

AT RAMASUNHAND
UTALIO EICH, AND THE BALANCE SCATTERED
AT THE CHIANG MAI SEISMIC STATION, KO KHA, JUSMAG AND
ELSEWHERE, PLUS 1,000 MEN OVER AND ABOVE THIS AS A
TEMPORARY RETROGRADE FORCE. SUCH A PRESENCE WAS CONSISTENT WITH
WHAT WE HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE BY
BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO BE
ACCEPTABLE TO THE RTG.

4. BY EARLY FEBRUARY IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE FABRIC OF OUR
NEGOTIATIONS AND PRESUMED AGREEMENTS TO DATE HAD BEGUN
TO UNRAVEL. ON FEBRUARY 4, THE MFA TABLED A NOTE CON-
TAINING SEVEN CONDITIONS OR PRINCIPLES TO THE RESIDUAL
PRESENCE. PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS ON THE RESIDUAL FORCE
WERE SUMMARILY DISMISSED AND WE FOUND OURSELVES BACK
TO SQUARE ONE WITH ONLY SIX WEEKS TO GO TILL THE
WITHDRAWAL DATE.

5. AT THE HEART OF THE THAI PROPOSALS WAS A DEMAND FOR
THAI JURISDICTION OVER REMAINING PERSONNEL AND
FACILITIES. ALTHOUGH THE THAI EVENTUALLY EXPRESSED
WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE ON OTHER PRINCIPLES, THEY
REMAINED ADAMANT THAT PRINCIPLE ONE (ON JURISDICTION)
WAS INVIOABLE. ATTEMPTS ON OUR PART TO SHAKE THIS
POSITION MET WITH FIRM REFUSALS, AND DISCUSSION OF
THE OTHER PRINCIPLES WAS HELD UP ON THIS ONE POINT.
IN ADDITION, THE THAI MADE IT CLEAR THAT,
AGREEMENT OR NO AGREEMENT, ON MARCH 20 ALL EXISTING
ARRANGEMENTS CONCERNING THE STATUS OF OUR FORCES HERE (EX-
CEPT JUSMAG) WOULD LAPSE.

6. WASHINGTON HAS ACCEPTED THE THAI VERSION OF PRINCIPLE
ONE, AND SEVERAL OF THE OTHER PRINCIPLES ARE UNDER URGENT

NEGOTIATIONS. IF THESE DO NOT SUCCEED, WE FACE THE
POSSIBILITY THAT COME SATURDAY, ALL US OPERATIONS (EXCEPT
JUSMAG) WILL CEASE, AND REMAINING MILITARY PERSONNEL AND
EQUIPMENT BE ORDERED TO WITHDRAW OVER A PERIOD OF SEVERAL
MONTHS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 06311 180937Z

7. IT APPEARS THAT A LAST-MINUTE SOLUTION MIGHT BE
ARRIVED AT, BUT WE ARE GOING RIGHT DOWN TO THE WIRE AND
THE OUTCOME IS STILL SOMEWHAT UNCERTAIN. IF A SOLUTION IS FOUND,
IT MIGHT MERELY DEFER THE JURISDICTION PROBLEM, LEAD-
ING TO ANOTHER CRUNCH POINT A FEW MONTHS HENCE AS WE TRY TO
NEGOTIATE A SOFA.

8. WE ARE DOING HEAVY REPORTING ON THIS WHOLE BUSINESS,

OF COURSE, AND DON'T WANT TO OVERTAX YOUR COMMUNICA-
TORS. PLEASE LET US KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT YOU WOULD
LIKE TO BE CARRIED ON THIS.
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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